

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01496 060347Z

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 SSO-00 /012 W

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O 060335Z MAY 76 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1457

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1496

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR BM

SUBJ: NARCOTICS CONTROL: POPPY IDENTIFICATION

REF: STATE 109582

1. AT SOCIAL OCCASION MAY 5, EMBOFF QUERIED COL. AUNG HTAY ONCE MORE RE MOPS TEAM PROPOSAL PRIOR RECEIPT REFTEL. HE INDICATED INFORMALLY THAT WHILE DECISION REGARDING TEAM VISIT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (RANGOON 1410) HAS YET TO BE MADE BY "HIGHER ECHELON" (HOME MINISTER U KO KO AND, PROBABLY, COL. TIN OO), HE DID NOT BELIEVE MAY 10-14 TIME FRAME WOULD BE POSSIBLE GIVEN OTHER GUB COMMITMENTS. EMBOFF EXPLAINED ONCE MORE THAT SOME TEAM MEMBERS HAD TO BE BACK IN WASHINGTON BY MAY 20 AND URGED THAT GUB SUGGEST ALTERNATE DATES WHEN VISIT WOULD BE FEASIBLE.

2. AUNG HTAY ALSO ASKED ABOUT COST OF MOPS PROGRAM. EMBOFF REMINDED HIM OF RUDY HALL'S ESTIMATE THAT INITIAL OUTLAY COULD TOTAL \$1.5 TO \$2 MILLION FOR TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, ETC., EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO DETERMINE IF THIS EXPENSIVE SYSTEM WOULD IN FACT BE SUITABLE FOR CONDITIONS IN BURMA; IF NOT, TEAM WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE MEANS THAT MIGHT BETTER MEET THE OBJECTIVE I.E., THE IDENTIFICATION OF ILLICIT POPPY FIELDS.

3. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR FROM AUNG HTAY'S REMARKS THAT GUB (OR AT LEAST AUNG HTAY) IS BEGINNING TO HAVE SOME SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT MOPS, PERHAPS IN PART BECAUSE SURVEY TEAM WOULD REQUIRE ACCESS TO CONSIDERABLE INFORMATION THAT GUB WOULD NORMALLY REGARD OFF LIMITS TO FOREIGNERS (MILITARY AERIAL PHOTO CAPABILITIES, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 01496 060347Z

FLIGHT OPERATIONS ETC.). SHOULD THIS BE THE CASE, IT COULD RESOLVE

THE ISSUE FOR US. NONETHELESS, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES WE SHOULD
STILL BE PREPARED TO PURSUE WITH THE BURMESE ADTERNATIVE METHODS
TO INCREASE THEIR CAPABILITY TO LOCATE ILLICIT POPPY SUCH AS USE
OF LIGHT OBSERVATION AIRCRAFT WHETHER MOPS TEAM IS ACCEPTED OR NOT.
OSBORN

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